

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-06 ARA-06 EUR-12 NEA-09 ISO-00 IO-10 AID-05

DPW-01 OMB-01 CIAE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00

NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 EB-07 TRSE-00

CIEP-01 AGR-05 IGA-01 COME-00 SR-02 ORM-01 /116 W

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P R 041050Z FEB 75

FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9199

INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

AMCONSUL BIEN HOA

AMCONSUL CAN THO

AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY MANILA

AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY SEOUL

AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL UDORN

USIA WASHDC

USMISSION USUN

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY RANGOON

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 2142

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PONT, PINS, PFOR, MOPS, ECON, CB
SUBJ: KHMER REPORT --FEBRUARY 4, 1975

GENERAL

1. ANOTHER MEKONG RIVER CONVOY FROM SOUTH VIETNAM CARRYING ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES ARRIVED IN PHNOM PENH THIS WEEK. HOWEVER, THE CUMULATIVE LOSSES OF VESSELS ON THE MEKONG THUS FAR ARE REACHING SERIOUS PROPORTIONS AND ARE THREATENING THE SUCCESS OF FUTURE CONVOYS

COMMUNIST ROCKETS FIRED AT POCHENTONG AIRPORT DESTROYED OR DAMAGED A NUMBER OF CIVILIAN AND MILITARY AIRCRAFT, BUT FANK COUNTER-OPERATIONS MAY NOW HAVE REDUCED THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THESE ATTACKS. THE MILITARY SITUATION AROUND PHNOM PENH WAS RELATIVELY QUIET WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE AREA NORTHWEST OF THE CAPITAL. THE KC, SUPPORTED BY THEIR ASIAN COMMUNIST ALLIES, ATTACKED PRESIDENT FORD'S JANUARY 28 REQUEST TO CONGRESS FOR SUPPLEMENTAL AID TO THE GKR. MEANWHILE, IN PHNOM PENH, INFORMED KHMER ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY CONCERNED OVER THE OPPOSITION WITHIN THE U.S. TO FURTHER ASSISTANCE TO CAMBODIA. IN WASHINGTON ON FEBRUARY 3, PRESIDENT FORD MET WITH BIPARTISAN CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS AND RESTATED HIS SUPPORT FOR SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATIONS FOR CAMBODIA AND SOUTH VIETNAM. ON THE SAME DAY, ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB TESTIFIED BEFORE A HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS SUB-CONFIDENTIAL

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COMMITTEE ON THE CAMBODIAN AID REQUEST.

POLITICAL (INTERNAL)

2. THERE WERE NO INTERNAL POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS OF NOTE AS THE COURSE OF THE KC OFFENSIVE WAS A PREOCCUPYING CONCERN. PRIME MINISTER LONG BORET MADE NO FURTHER PUBLIC MOVES TO COMPLETE THE EXPECTED RESHUFFLING OF HIS CABINET.

3. THE KHMER PRESS IS DEVOTING INCREASING ATTENTION TO THE QUESTION OF AMERICAN ASSISTANCE TO THE GKR. A THEME SOUNDED ON A DAILY BASIS IS THAT THE U.S., WITH ITS OBLIGATIONS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, SHOULD NOT ABANDON THE GKR IN ITS BATTLE TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST COMMUNISM AND ULTIMATELY TO ACHIEVE A NEGOTIATED SOLUTION. STATEMENTS TO THE CONTRARY BY MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN CONGRESS ARE NOTED WITH ALARM. SUCH ARTICLES, WHICH ARE NOW APPEARING IN GOVERNMENT PAPERS AS WELL AS PRIVATE ONES, REFLECT GROWING ANXIETY AMONG GKR LEADERS AND MIDDLE LEVEL OFFICIALS WHO HAVE SOME APPRECIATION OF THE OPPOSITION IN CONGRESS TO THE PRESIDENT'S REQUEST FOR SUPPLEMENTARY ASSISTANCE TO CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM.

POLITICAL (EXTERNAL)

4. ON JANUARY 28, PRESIDENT FORD SENT A MESSAGE TO CONGRESS REQUESTING SUPPLEMENTAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE GKR AND THE GVN. THE PRESIDENT SAID ONCE AGAIN THAT "OUR IMMEDIATE GOAL IN CAMBODIA IS TO FACILITATE AN EARLY NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT" AND HE NOTED U.S. FULL SUPPORT FOR THE GKR PROPOSAL FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRE-CONDITIONS. THE U.S., THE PRESIDENT SAID, MUST CONTINUE TO AID THE GKR TO HOLD ITS OWN AGAINST "EXTERNALLY SUPPORTED MILITARY ATTACKS" SO THAT THE KC WILL REALIZE THEY CANNOT WIN BY FORCE OF ARMS AND WILL "LOOK TO NEGOTIATIONS RATHER THAN WAR". ACCORDINGLY, THE PRESIDENT PROPOSED AN ADDITIONAL 222 MILLION DOLLARS IN MILITARY ASSISTANCE AND ELIMINATION OF THE CURRENT CEILING OF 200 MILLION DOLLARS FOR MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO CAMBODIA. HE ALSO REQUESTED ELIMINATION OF THE OVERALL ASSISTANCE CEILING OF 377 MILLION DOLLARS SO THAT VITAL COMMODITIES, PARTICULARLY FOOD, CAN BE PROVIDED UNDER PREVIOUSLY APPROPRIATED FUNDS FOR THE FOOD FOR PEACE PROGRAM TO "PREVENT ECONOMIC COLLAPSE OF THE COUNTRY". THE CONSEQUENCES OF REFUSING THIS ASSISTANCE "WILL REACH FAR BEYOND CAMBODIA'S BORDERS AND IMPACT SEVERELY ON PROSPECTS FOR PEACE AND STABILITY IN THAT REGION AND THE WORLD".

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5. THE GKR MINISTRY OF INFORMATION IN A JANUARY 27 STATEMENT DEPLORED THE FACT THAT TWO YEARS AFTER SIGNING OF THE PARIS ACCORDS, THE WAR IN INDOCHINA HAS NOT CEASED. THE DECLARATION RECALLED THE HOPE OF THE GKR THAT THE ACCORDS WOULD BRING PEACE TO CAMBODIA AND LAOS AS WELL AS VIETNAM AND OUTLINED THE INITIATIVES OF THE GKR TOWARD A PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT, MOST RECENTLY THE JULY 9, 1974 PROPOSAL OF PRESIDENT LON NOL FOR NEGOTIATIONS WITHOUT PRECONDITIONS. THE DECLARATION APPEALED TO THE "INDOCHINESE COMMUNISTS" TO END ALL MILITARY OPERATIONS AND REMOVE ALL FORCES FROM THE TERRITORY OF THE KHMER REPUBLIC.

GRUNK/FUNK

6. SIHANOUK CONTINUED HIS RELATIVE INACTIVITY OF THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS. HE HAS NOT SAID MUCH PUBLICLY SINCE HIS COMMENTS

LAST MONTH THAT GKR LEADERS HAD BEEN IN CONTACT WITH HIM (KHMER REPORT OF JANUARY 14, 1975). MEANWHILE THE IN-COUNTRY PROPAGANDA APPARATUS HAS STAYED WITH THE TOPICS IT HAS STRESSED SINCE THE OFFENSIVE BEGAN. AMONG THESE WERE: (A) MORE "APPEALS" FOR THE PHNOM PENH POPULATION TO RISE UP AGAINST THE GKR AND FOR FOREIGN DIPLOMATS TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY, (B) ATTACKS, ECHOED BY ASIAN COMMUNIST ALLIES OF THE KC, AGAINST U.S. ASSISTANCE TO CAMBODIA IN GENERAL AND PRESIDENT FORD'S SUPPLEMENTAL REQUEST IN PARTICULAR, (C) BOASTING OF SPURIOUS KC ACCOMPLISHMENTS AROUND PHNOM PENH, AND ALONG THE MEKONG, AND OF ROCKET ATTACKS AGAINST POCHENTONG (D) EMBROIDERING AND ELABORATING ON CHARGES OF GVN BOMBING IN CAMBODIA.

7. GURNK FOREIGN MINISTER SARIN CHHAK COMPLETED HIS VISIT TO AFGHANISTAN (LAST WEEK'S KHMER REPORT) ON JANUARY 28, AFTER MEETINGS WITH THE AFGHAN PRESIDENT AND OTHER HIGH RANKING GOA OFFICIALS. HE NEXT VISITED DAMASCUS FOR THREE DAYS, MET WITH THE SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND DELIVERED A LETTER FROM SIHANOUK TO PRESIDENT HAFIZ AL-ASAD. HE THEN WENT TO ALGERIA, WHERE HE AND HIS DELEGATION MET WITH PRESIDENT BOUMEDIENNE.

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P R 041050Z FEB 75

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AMCONSUL UDORN
USIA WASHDC
USMISSION USUN
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PHNOM PENH 2142

ECONOMIC

8. USAID CHARTERED CRAFT AND CRAFT UNDER AID-FINANCED LEASES HAVE SUFFERED HEAVY LOSSES DURING THE JANUARY MEKONG RIVER CONVOYS BETWEEN PHNOM PENH AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE BORDER. (FOR A COMPLETE RECAPITULATION OF CONVOY LOSSES SEE MILITARY SECTION BELOW). OUT OF EIGHT OIL TANKERS, ONLY THREE ARE PRESENTLY OPERATIONA, THREE HAVE BEEN SUNK AND TWO ARE BEING REPAIRED. TWO TUGS HAVE BEEN SUNK AND TWO RICE COASTERS, ONE EMPTY THE OTHER WITH 1,653 METRIC TONS (M/T) OF RICE HAVE BEEN

LOST. LATEST REPORTS INDICATE THAT INSURANCE COMPANIES ARE NOW REFUSING TO PROVIDE WAR RISK COVERAGE FOR VESSELS IN FUTURE CONVOYS.

9. RICE STOCKS ON HAND ON FEBRUARY 2 TOTALLED 22.4 THOUSAND M/T OR A 41- DAY SUPPLY AT THE OFFICIAL DISTRIBUTION LEVEL OF 545 TONS PER DAY. ACTUAL DISTRIBUTION FOR THE PAST WEEK AVERAGED 380 TONS PER DAY. ON JANUARY 30-31, 6,750 M/T OF RICE ARRIVED IN PHNOM PENH VIA A MEKONG RIVER CONVOY, THE FIRST RICE TO REACH THE CAPITAL VIA THE MEKONG IN OVER A MONTH. NINETY MORE TONS OF RICE WERE ALSO OBTAINED FROM HARVESTS IN THE PHNOM PENH AREA.

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10. THE REFUGEE SITUATION AT NEAK LUONG (SEE KHMER REPORT, JANUARY 14, 1975) HAS BECOME RELATIVELY STABLE WITH A DECLINE IN MILITARY ACTIVITY IN THE AREA. VOLUNTARY AGENCIES ARE PROVIDING ASSISTANCE. ON FEBRUARY 1-2 THE KC ATTACKED A REFUGEE CAMP AT KOMPONG SPEU, KILLING ABOUT TWELVE REFUGEES AND WOUNDING AN ADDITIONAL NUMBER. SIXTY-ONE OF SEVENTY-TWO TEN-FAMILY DWELLINGS RECENTLY CONSTRUCTED BY CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICES FOR THE REFUGEES WERE BURNED.

11. OCEAN FISH INCREASED 39 PERCENT, CITRUS FRUITS 20 PERCENT, CHICKEN EGGS 16 PERCENT, BUT FOR MOST OTHER GOODS, PRICES WERE GENERALLY UNCHANGED OR RECORDED MODEST DECLINES IN PHNOM PENH MARKETS DURING THE PAST WEEK. IMPORTED (PL-480) RICE DECLINED 15 PERCENT, LOCAL RICE 12 PERCENT AND CHARCOAL 4 PERCENT. THE BLACK MARKET EXCHANGE RATE DECLINED FROM 1,750 TO 1,700 RIELS PER DOLLAR DURING THE WEEK, BUT CLOSED AT 1,750. THE OFFICIAL (FREE MARKET) RATE REMAINED UNCHANGED AT 1,650 RIELS PER DOLLAR. GOLD DROPPED SLIGHTLY FROM \$171 TO \$164 DOLLARS PER TROY OUNCE DURING THE WEEK.

MILITARY

12. A THIRD MEKONG RIVER CONVOY FROM SOUTH VIETNAM ARRIVED IN PHNOM PENH JANUARY 31 -31, CARRYING RICE, FUEL AND AMMUNITION. THERE NOW HAVE BEEN THREE SUCH CONVOYS (SEE LAST WEEK'S KHMER REPORT) BRINGING BADLY NEEDED ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES, AS WELL AS TWO RETURN DOWN-RIVER CONVOYS, BUT THE LOSSES HAVE BEEN HEAVY. (SEE ALSO ECONOMIC SECTION ABOVE). TWO RICE CARGO VESSELS, THREE OIL TANKERS AND THREE TUGS HAVE BEEN SUNK OR ABANDONED. EIGHT OF THE IMPORTANT SHIELD BARGES WHICH PROTECT THE VESSELS ARE LOST OR UNACCOUNTED FOR, AND THREE OTHER MISCELLANEOUS BARGES AND TUGS, CONVOY HANGERS-ON HAVE ALSO BEEN LOST. THE KC REPORTEDLY BEGAN USING MINES AGAINST

A FEBRUARY 3 DOWN-RIVER CONVOY AND MANY OF THE ABOVE VESSELS WERE PUT OUT OF ACTION ON THAT DATE. ASUB-STATIONAL NUMBER OF CIVILIAN CREW MEMBERS HAVE BEEN WOUNDED.

13. THE KC CONTINUED TO FIRE ROCKETS AT PHNOM PENH AND
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POCHENTONG AIRPORT AND WERE PARTICULARLY ACCURATE AGAINST THE LATTER. ON JANUARY 31, EIGHTEEN 107MM ROCKETS LANDED ON POCHENTONG, DESTROYING ONE T-28 FIGHTER BOMBER AND DAMAGING WO OTHER T-28S, THREE HELICOPTERS, TWO C-123'S AND AT LEAST THREE CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT. SINCE THEN, HOWEVER, FANK AIR AND GROUND OPERATIONS HAVE APPARENTLY SUCCEEDED IN REDUCING THE INTENSITY AND ACCURACY OF THE ROCKET ATTACKS. THE AIRPORT IF FUNCTIONING, BUT INTERNATIONAL FLIGHTS ARE NOW RESTRICTED TO AIR CAMBODGE. THE KC SHELLING OF PHNOM PENH ITSELF HAS ALSO DIMINISHED, ALTHOUGH A HOSPITAL, PAGADO AND MILITARY DEPENDENT HOUSING CAMP WERE HIT BY ROCKETS DURING THE WEEK, RESULTING IN SUBSTANTIAL CASUALTIES.

14. THE SITUATION AROUND PHNOM PENH IS RELATIVELY QUIET AT PRESENT WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE FANK 7TH DIVISION ARE NORTHWEST OF THE CAPITAL. THE ROAD BETWEEN THE DIVISION COMMAND POST AND ONE OF THE BRIGADES IS STILL CUT AND DIVISION FORCES ARE WEARYING AFTER A MONTH OF HEAVY COMBAT, BUT ARE STILL INFLECTING HEAVY CASUALTIES ON THE KC. LITTLE CHANGE WAS REPORTED ON THE MEKONG EAST BANK OPPOSITE PHNOM PENH WHERE FANK FORCES ARE STILL ATTEMPTING TO ROOT OUT A DETERMINED ENEMY PRESENCE. NORTHEAST OF THE CITY, FRIENDLY FORCES WERE MORE SUCCESSFUL, REPORTEDLY KILLING 49 AND 105 KC SOLDIERS IN TWO SEPERATE ENGAGMENTS. ALONG ROUTE 1 WOUTHEAST OF PHNOM PENH THERE IS LITTLE MOVEMENT AND THE KC STILL CONTROL A 35-40 KILOMETER STRETCH OF THE ROAD.

15. ROUTE 6 BETWEEN SIEM REAP AND THE THAI BORDER IS REPORTED OPEN AFTER SEVERAL WEEKS OF KC INTERDICTION. THE KC CONTINUE THEIR PRESSURE ALONG RT5 SOUTHEAST OF BATTAMBANG. AT THE PROVINCIAL CAPITAL OF KAMPOT IN SOUTHWESTERN CAMBODIA, THE KC HAVE PENETRATED PORTIONS OF THE DEFENSIVE PERIMTER AND INTERDICTED ITS SHORT RIVER ACCESS TO THE GOLF OF THAILAND, THUS FORCING AIR RESUPPLY OF KAMPOT. HOWEVER, NO FURTHER PROGRESS IS BEING MADE BY THE KC AND UNDERSTRENGHT FANK DEFENDERS HAVE ACQUITTED THEMSELVES VERY WELL, KILLING 50 KC SOLDIERS IN ONE OPERATION.

16. THE KC DURING THE WEEK ATTACKED AND BURNED PORTIONS OF AT
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LEAST WO REFUGEE CAMPS (SEE ECONOMIC SECTION ABOVE) IN WHAT APP-
EARS TO BE A CALCULATED POLICY OF TERRORIZING THE CIVILIAN
AND REFUGEE POPULACE BY MILITARY MEANS. THE
GKR HAS DECNOUNCED THESE ATTACKS IN AN OFFICIAL COMMUNI-
QUE TO THE MINISTRY OF INFORMATION.
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